

that instead of producing a narrative history he had been engaged in the production of a book of boxes. Given the number of single-author histories of Byzantium that exist, and the growing number of multi-author guides to the history, society and culture of the Byzantine empire, the obvious format to embrace is the sourcebook, the provision of selected texts in translation with commentary. This has not been attempted for Byzantine history as a whole since D.J. Geanakoplos' *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (1984). A more focussed version, incorporating images of material remains, would be both welcome and useful.

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MARTYRDOM

GRIG (L.) *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*. Pp xiv + 207, map, ill., pls. London: Duckworth, 2004. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-7156-3285-X.

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During the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century A.D., the exiled bishop Lucifer of Cagliari challenged the emperor (a heretic, in Lucifer's view) by expressing the absolute firmness of his own resolve: 'It matters nothing whether I am killed by the nail or the lance, with my hands tied behind my back or spread and stretched out, whether I am bent over or upright and raised high; it does not matter whether you kill me sleeping in my bed, whether you cut my neck with a sword while I am standing or shear my head clean off with an axe, whether you fix me to a stake or a cross, whether you roast me with fire or bury me alive, whether you cast me from a rock or submerge me in the sea ... or whether you play, fixing arrows in my body for a long time with sharpness greater than all sharpness' (*Moriundum esse pro Dei filio* 14: tr. Richard Flower). Lucifer's litany of horrors suggests something of the fascination with which martyrdom was viewed in the ancient world and has been since: the repugnant nature of these methods of judicial murder contrasting with the delight in retelling the details, a literary technique which has been aptly labelled 'the pornography of violence'. Nor is the implication of an element of fantasy out of place. In recent years the study of martyrdom has increasingly come to focus on the literary construction of texts about martyrs, and on their political and social contexts and functions.

Lucy Grig's new book explicitly places itself in this tradition, as represented in part by the recent work of Keith Hopkins and Daniel Boyarin. G. prefers not to investigate the historical extent of persecution or the reasons behind it, talking instead in terms of 'a persecution complex' which was 'constructed, amplified and multiplied through a vast body of material ... which then became accepted as history' (p. 14). Her interest is in the texts and the stories themselves, as 'the scene for theological or ecclesiological debate' (p. 18), and she repeatedly asserts her reluctance to resolve the inherent 'conflicts and contradictions' (p. 3) that this approach must produce: 'Just as the experience of persecution in the early church was varied, so too were its discourses' (p. 8). Any intention of producing a comprehensive account is disavowed, in favour of a set of 'case studies' which may 'throw light on broader issues of Christianisation and the roles of narrative and representation therein' (p. 3). Thus, leaving aside the introduction and conclusion, the book presents a brief history of martyrdom

followed by four substantial chapters on various aspects of the phenomenon – the use of martyr texts in the North African liturgy, the presentation of judicial violence in the texts, the growth of the cult of relics, and visual representations of martyrs and martyr-worship. G. also includes a slim appendix on hagiography which (despite protestations to the contrary) seems to have wandered in unnecessarily from the Ph.D. thesis on which the book is based.

Indeed, the one major problem with G.'s book is a structural one, and is founded on the decision to interleave the synthetic chapters with short accounts of individual martyrs: Cyprian, Marculus, Agnes, Felix of Nola, and Laurence. All these are worthy of study, and some very good points are made; it is also clear that a structure of this sort is superficially attractive. Yet it leads to the ghettoising of these prominent figures, to their isolation from the main points being made elsewhere (e.g. p. 93, where the story of Felix is relevant but must be deferred). This difficulty is most obvious early in the book when a discussion anticipates the saint's life, such that a leap of chronology or logic must be covered by a reference forward (p. 18, p. 20: 'Cyprian ... as we shall see'). This means that the book is difficult to read in the order suggested by the contents page; and it may contribute to G.'s persistent tendency to over-explain the nature of her project and the coherence of her conclusions. Such anxiety seems counter-productive, and on the last page of the last chapter leads her to make the remarkable concession that 'my conclusions are not all apparently compatible at first sight' but that they 'can, however, be synthesised' (p. 135).

In this G. undersells the chapter and the book, as if forgetting that the aim had initially been to respect the complexity of the original evidence and to 'make no effort to attempt to weave differing and often conflicting elements into a coherent "orthodoxy"' (p. 8). This seems to me a perfectly valid approach, and while the attempts at general conclusions are unconvincing, the real value of the book lies in the numerous observations and arguments that are made in G.'s disparate case studies. Some of these are excellent: the study in Chapter 4 of the ways in which the language of judicial persecution was refashioned in late antiquity stands out; as does the next chapter's discussion of the role of Augustine and others in promoting the miracles of local martyrs, and so elaborating their stories into the contemporary world. Martyrs were dead by definition; but, as G. shows, their afterlife remained up for grabs.

The emperor refused to martyr Lucifer of Cagliari, perhaps recognising that 'telling stories about martyrs' (p. 4) was easier, and perhaps more effective, than creating new ones. Yet for precisely this reason, the role of the martyr in late antiquity and beyond will always be more complex than the comparatively simple dynamic of persecution (on the part of the strong) and suffering (on the part of the weak). G.'s book constantly strives to make this clear, and she is particularly effective in choosing powerful and convincing examples. Her final martyr account happily includes the joke often told in late antiquity about Laurence, condemned to be roasted alive on a gridiron. The story, in the version G. quotes, is that after a time the unruffled Laurence said to his torturers, 'I am cooked, turn me over and eat' (p. 138). A triumph for the Christians, of course, if something of a Pyrrhic victory for Laurence himself; but G. chooses not to include an even later tradition giving his Roman captors the last word. If Laurence was so eager to be turned, they said, he should muster the energy to turn himself – a gibe which is credited as the origin of the phrase 'as lazy as Laurence'. This final twist only goes to show what G. maintains throughout: for a martyr, death was only the beginning.

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